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C O N F I D E N T I A L PRETORIA 003195

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [HA](#) [SF](#)
SUBJECT: (C) ARISTIDE "COMFORTABLE" IN SOUTH AFRICA; SAG
CONSIDERING DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS IN HAITI

REF: 05 PRETORIA 4926

Classified By: DCM Donald Teitelbaum. Reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Former Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide remains "comfortable" in Pretoria at the University of South Africa (UNISA), according to Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) Director for Mexico, Central America, The Andean Community and the Caribbean, Ambassador Pieter Swanepoel (protect). Swanepoel told PolOff July 28 that South Africa continues to support Aristide's return to Haiti "at the appropriate time," but understands the potentially destabilizing impact of his homecoming. DFA stays in touch with Aristide "from time to time," but no longer provides him with a secretary because "she had nothing to do."

¶2. (C) Swanepoel noted that "some in the political opposition" -- likely referring to Democratic Alliance leader Tony Leon -- occasionally criticize the SAG for funding Aristide's stay in South Africa. (Note: as recently as June 7, Leon attacked the SAG for paying for the "luxurious exile of Jean-Bertrand Aristide." End Note.) Swanepoel doubted that opposition criticism would affect the SAG position on hosting Aristide. (Comment: Post agrees; the DA, which is viewed largely as the "white party" and has only 16 percent of Parliament seats, seldom has any impact on SAG policy. End Comment.)

¶3. (C) On broader Haiti policy, South Africa continues to follow CARICOM's lead. Swanepoel said that South Africa "took note" of the recent CARICOM decision to readmit Haiti to full membership.

¶4. (C) Swanepoel said that DFA is "dusting off" some old ideas for providing health and education assistance to Haiti. In 2003, the SAG set aside Rand 10 million (approximately USD 1.5 million) for development projects in Haiti, but diverted the funds to support Haiti's bicentennial celebrations. DFA has set up a small working group to resurrect the health and education proposals, and the group will likely visit Haiti in the coming months to discuss the ideas with the Government of Haiti. Swanepoel said that he believed that South Africa's experience with reconciliation might also be of value in Haiti.
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